

**Testimony of Lynn A. Faria, Coordinator for Healthy Meriden 2020**  
**Chairperson, Meriden Community Vision**  
**Vice Chair, South Central CT Substance Abuse Council**  
**Director of Community Relations, MidState Medical Center**

**H.B. No. 5044 AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES**  
**FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2017**

*Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services – Regional Action Council Funding*  
*February 18, 2016 Appropriations Subcommittee on Health Public Hearing*

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Gerratana and Representative Dillon, my name is Lynn Faria, (I am a registered voter in the city of Meriden), Coordinator for Healthy Meriden 2020, Chair of Meriden Community Vision, Vice Chair of the South Central CT Substance Abuse Council, and Director of Community Relations for MidState Medical Center and I strongly oppose the significant cuts to regional action councils that will dismantle the current prevention network structure.

The RACs partner with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) to assess local needs and assist communities to address substance abuse issues with realistic programs and initiatives that are aimed to reduce the impact of drug abuse and provide resources for those persons who are already in need of treatment. The RACs are chartered by CT State statute and work with local and statewide partners as part of a unique prevention framework that is cited as a model by federal departments. As a founding member of the RAC for south central Connecticut, I, along with my collaborative community partners, have seen the huge need for these community prevention services. It is through these community collaborative relationships that we are able to realize collective impact.

Our communities have recently participated in community health needs assessments that have supported the fact that Connecticut is faced with an overwhelming number of young people addicted to prescription drugs and heroin. A multi-faceted approach is needed that reaches from the State government to the individuals in each community. The RACs continue to work directly with DMHAS and our local communities to provide education on opiates, Naloxone, and treatment options. Importantly, the RACs have been able to move quickly to address local needs including medication drop boxes, opiate discussion forums and trainings for emergency responders.

In this region of the state, SCCSAC has been addressing opiate issues since collaborating with a Brown University study in 2011 that pinpointed prescription drug abuse in central CT. In 2015 alone SCCSAC provided education on opiates to 500 people as well as mental health and suicide awareness to more than 1000 persons. SCCSAC has also worked directly with faith communities throughout the state to educate congregations on substance abuse, problem gambling, changes in marijuana use and laws, mental health awareness and suicide prevention. Through the area community health improvement plan, we have been able to support these varied initiatives.

I urge the Legislature to reject the severe budget cuts to RACs that would remove the services to local communities at this critical time. Thank you for the opportunity to address your subcommittee.